



# Americans Getting Less Concerned, More Upbeat About Automation

## Seniors Driving the Positive Change

**Washington, DC, September 6, 2018** – Compared to a year ago, **Americans are less likely to express negative feelings and more likely to express positive feelings about automation**, according to a new survey conducted by Ipsos in partnership with the Center for Business Analytics (CBA) at the McIntire School of Commerce at the University of Virginia. The results of the survey are being released ahead of the CBA's fifth annual Business Analytics Colloquium.

A comparison of the survey findings with those of a similar survey conducted in 2017 shows that:

- **Employed Americans are less worried about the effects of automation on the workplace**, and
- **Seniors have taken a big step forward in embracing automation over the past year.**

Both the survey fielded in August 2018 and the previous one fielded in June-July 2017 were conducted among a national sample of approximately 3,000 U.S. adults aged 18 and older.

Findings show that Americans are now less likely to express negative feelings and more likely to express positive feelings about automation than they were in 2017:

- While still widespread, various concerns have receded, including those related to:
  - **Isolation**, down 12 points to 57%,
  - **Job destruction**, down 7 points to 49%
  - **Safety**, down 7 points to 40%, and
  - **Security**, down 6 points to 64%.
- U.S. consumers are increasingly viewing automation as having more benefits than drawbacks (up 5 points to 48%); making life easier and more interesting (up 4 points to 67%); and making products and services better (up 2 points to 53%), more accessible (up 5 points to 70%), and easier to use (up 5 points to 61%).

Among all age groups, Americans aged 65 and older show the most change in their views toward automation in the course of one year – all pointing to less apprehension and more excitement.

- Unsurprisingly, Americans under 35 are most optimistic – or least pessimistic – about nearly every aspect of automation. Younger Americans are more positive/less negative in their sentiment toward automation compared to the total population by an average of five percentage points on a battery of 12 attitudinal statements.
- However, Americans aged 65 and older are now more likely than those aged 35-64 to view automation as having more benefits than drawbacks (52% vs. 43%), making life easier (70% vs. 64%), making life more interesting (56% vs. 51%), and improving the quality of products and services (57% vs. 46%)—and they are less likely to worry about its effect on jobs (42% vs. 51%).

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## Press Release – continued –

U.S. workers employed in the extraction/utilities/construction and education sectors are those who most worry about losing their job to automation (48% and 38%, respectively), expect their job to be done by machines in 20 years (49% and 44%), and see automation as making the workplace less friendly (56% and 60%).

- Those in (1) manufacturing, (2) finance/real estate, (3) professional/scientific/technical services, (4) administration support services, and (5) despite being especially worried about automation, those in education most see automation as having:
  - totally changed their job in the past 20 years (64%, 66%, 60%, 59%, and 62%, respectively);
  - made it easier (62%, 65%, 60%, 60%, and 57%), more interesting (48%, 47%, 42%, 45%, and 48%),
  - made it less stressful (50%, 31%, 40%, 43%, and 50%), and
  - made them more productive (47%, 57%, 53%, 54%, and 52%).
- Those least likely to perceive automation as being beneficial are employed in:
  - Government (only 23% feel like automation has made their job less stressful vs. 38% of all workers);
  - Arts/sports/recreation (only 20% feel more productive due to automation vs. 45% for all workers);
  - Wholesale and retail (only 26% feel automation has made their work less stressful); and
  - Transportation/warehousing (only 22% feel automation has made their job has become more interesting vs. 40% of all workers and 38% say it's made their job easier vs. 53% of all workers).

Between 2017 and 2018, the most notable changes in how employed Americans look at automation are the significant drops in the percentages of those who worry about losing their job because of it (down 9 points to 26%), expect their job to be done by machines in 20 years (down 8 points to 32%), and say it has made the workplace less sociable and friendly (down 7 points to 48%). In parallel, the percentage of those who say it's made their job easier went up 4 points to 53% and those who say it's made it more interesting went up 3 points to 40%.

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### About the Study

These are findings from Ipsos polls conducted June 29 – July 3, 2017 among 2,982 adults and August 14 – 17, 2018 among 3,016 adults. For the survey, adults age 18+ from the continental U.S., Alaska and Hawaii were interviewed online in English. The 2018 sample includes 205 respondents aged 18-24, 597 respondents aged 25-34, 850 respondents aged 35-49, 648 respondents aged 50-64, and 716 respondents aged 65+.

The sample for this study was randomly drawn from Ipsos’s online panel (see link below for more info on “Access Panels and Recruitment”), partner online panel sources, and “river” sampling (see link below for more info on the Ipsos “Ampario Overview” sample method) and does not rely on a population frame in the traditional sense. Ipsos uses fixed sample targets, unique to each study, in drawing sample. After a sample has been obtained from the Ipsos panel, Ipsos calibrates respondent characteristics to be representative of the U.S. Population using standard procedures such as raking-ratio adjustments. The source of these population targets is U.S. Census 2016 American Community Survey data. The sample drawn for this study reflects fixed sample targets on demographics. Post-hoc weights were made to the population characteristics on gender, age, race/ethnicity, region, and education.

Statistical margins of error are not applicable to online nonprobability sampling polls. All sample surveys and polls may be subject to other sources of error, including, but not limited to coverage error and measurement error. Where figures do not sum to 100, this is due to the effects of rounding. The precision of Ipsos online polls is measured using a credibility interval. In this case, the poll has a credibility interval of plus or minus 2.0 percentage points for all respondents. Ipsos calculates a design effect (DEFF) for each study based on the variation of the weights, following the formula of Kish (1965). This study had a credibility interval adjusted for design effect of the following (n=3,016, DEFF=1.5, adjusted Confidence Interval=3.5).

The poll also has a credibility interval plus or minus 7.8 percentage points for 18-24 year-old respondents, 4.6 percentage points for 25-34 year-old respondents, 3.8 percentage points for 35-49 year-old respondents, 4.4 percentage points for 50-64 year-old respondents, and 4.2 percentage points for 65+ year-old respondents.

For more information about conducting research intended for public release or Ipsos’ online polling methodology, please visit our [Public Opinion Polling and Communication](#) page where you can download our brochure, see our public release protocol, or contact us.

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